Phra Ajahn Kanchit Suthijitto

Phoo Mai How Temple, Amphoe Dongluang

Mukdahan Province

www.phraajahnkanchit.com

Herein, Udāyi, a monk cultivates the limb of wisdom that is mindfulness, that is based on seclusion, on dispassion, on cessation, that ends in self-surrender:

that is far-spreading, lofty, boundless, free from malevolence.

As he does so, craving is abandoned.

By the abandoning of craving, action (rooted in craving) is abandoned.

By the abandoning of action (rooted in craving), Ill is abandoned.

Thus, Udāyi, by the destruction of craving comes destruction of action (rooted in craving).

By destruction of action (rooted in craving) comes destruction of Ill.

KhayaSutta,SamyuttaNikaya, Mahā-Vagga,

Preface

This Dhamma teaching "The Noble Path" explains clearly that despite the various methods of practice, if the goal is right, all the methods lead to the end of suffering. The essence of the practice is to develop the foundation-faculty—mindfulness. Then mindfulness will safeguard the mind, foster concentration (*samādhi*) and help us develop mindfulness and clarity of consciousness *(sati-sampajañña)*. If one perseveres to practice and follow the method that suits one's characteristic behavior until strong mindfulness and clarity of consciousness are developed, the mind will be one-pointed and stable. Wisdom is thus developed and will eventually lead to the awakening and the end of suffering. This is the supreme goal of the practice that we all must work hard for.

In this teaching, Phra Arjahn explains in details the thirty-seven qualities contributing to enlightenment *(Bodhipakkhiya-dhamma)*. He points out that mindfulness is an essential factor in all limbs of the teachings. It is the center of all dhamma. On a practical level, when we practice mindfulness seriously and continuously, the other qualities contributing to enlightenment will develop simultaneously.

This teaching is a perfect guide for practitioners. It enables the readers to see the whole structure of the teachings. With this understanding to start with, the future practice will be in accordance with the right view. The practitioner will not stray from the noble path. With the right view, one will develop a clear comprehension of the dhamma, and will be able to eventually free oneself from suffering.

The Noble Path

A Practical Guide

The teachings of the Buddha are meant to teach everyone's mind. It is the Buddha's goal to see that everyone is happy and free from suffering.

We have faith in the teachings of the Buddha. We do believe that he has really attained the Great Enlightenment, and that he was awakened and could really free himself from all sufferings.

To be free from suffering means *suffering will no more arise*. Suffering has no place in a mind that has realized the end of suffering. We are certain that if we determine to practice, the teachings of the Buddha can actually release our mind from pain and distress. Not only monks, nuns and lay-practitioners who left their homes to stay in the temples, but everyone and every householder can free himself/herself from suffering if he/she takes the practice seriously. If practicing is like taking a journey, then everyone can take this same journey to the end of suffering.

What kind of journey does the mind take?

Those who are unhappy always look outward. They usually interested in other people's business...*this person said this, this person said that, that person is thinking negatively against me, this is not good, I want it another way, this is not good either, I want it that way*, etc. All these are external matters! And this is **the kind of journey that the mind takes—outward-wandering! We never look inward to see that there's the one within ourselves who is in command and takes control of everything, is no one else but this is mind of ours!**

The mind is the prime principal that does all kinds of forming. Although we know so well that birth is inevitably followed by age, sickness and death, but in the end we realize that what we thought was OUR self, are actually not *we* nor *ours*. This body and mind are *non-self*

(the Anattā). They are just nature, whose conditions repeatedly change and are driven by the karmic forces. There are no such things as *us* or *ours, neither me nor mine.* This clinging nature has been going on for who knows how long...how many lives, how many aeons? Still we are infatuated by things that originate from formation, and still believe this constantly changing nature to be our *self.* This is the delusion that still remains intact within our mind.

The Buddha has taught that one should observe one's mind

During the time of the Buddha, the Enlightened One would teach his disciples how to observe their mind. He called for an assembly, saying, "***Bhikkhus, if you are not wise with other people's mind, then be wise with your own***", which literally means that, in fact, we cannot know what other people think or feel at all time. It is impossible to fathom other people's mind. So instead we should be wise and pay attention to our own mind.

Here, the word *Bhikkhus* refers to everyone who came to listen to his dhamma. Those who seek the dhamma are those who see the danger of samsara—the danger of all-encompassing cycle of suffering; birth, aging, sickness and death, the danger of the mental formation. They discern that this very mind and its formation are the causes of rebirth. Thus, *samsāra* is not something far away after all.

To be wise enough to know the condition of our mind, we need to develop mindfulness and clarity of consciousness, or else the mind will always be clouded with desires. If you want to know the nature of the mind, and be able to teach it, handle it...if you want the mind to have a positive thinking, if you want to be happy...but you refuse to practice? If you want the mind to be mindful and clever, want to free yourself from pain and mental suffering ...but you do not want to practice? *That* is impossible!

The Buddha has shown the way and the methods, but if we do not heed his words and put them into practice, then the teachings cannot complete its purpose. **No matter how much you have heard, you need to study and understand his teachings then actually practice the dhamma until the**

practice yields results and the mental suffering subsides. Then you can say you benefit from the teachings of the Buddha.

You should also observe whether your suffering has been put out. If after the practice you become talkative, quick to argue, proud, believing yourself to be superior and better than others, this's not it! In that case, instead of putting an end to suffering, you are adding more suffering to yourself, because the notion of the *self* is there. Sometimes you try to look reserved outwardly, showing off that you are a serious practitioner and better than others. This is not the right way either. **The way of the Buddha is the path to the end of suffering in mind. The essence lies in the fact that suffering must be lessened until there is no more suffering.**

Therefore, whatever posture you are in or whatever you are doing, pay attention to your mind. See what the mind is like at the present moment. On the external side, your goal must be the cultivation of strong mindfulness and clarity of consciousness, so that you can see the mind clearly and are able to handle and train it. The practice will enable the mind to understand and discern reality as it is present, until the mind finally learns to let go.

You will learn to let go in the end, and not to cling or hold on to anything. When you first start practicing, you tend to have all sorts of expectation. But once you actually start, you will let go everything. There will be nothing that you want, nothing left to hold on to.

This is why the Buddha said we should be wise with our own mind. Because the mind is always fooled and misled by delusion, it collects external information (including other people's business) and draw them inward. From the stored information, we form further, negatively or positively, wholesome or unwholesome. In fact, the arisen disturbing feelings originate from our own formation that overrides the mind. They make us feel even more distressed. Unfortunately we do not know how to free ourselves from them.

Take a good look at your mind. In normal state, it is fine and at ease. But once mind is in contact with the sense-object, or when you start thinking about something unpleasant, suffering creeps in. When suffering arises, the mind keeps adding up more fabrication. The result is, you get stuck in the circle of worries and distress.

However, pain and distress can be beneficial. If because of them you turn to the Dhamma, and realize that suffering itself is the nature of the three characteristics: arise, stay temporarily and fall away, then when suffering fall away, your mind immediately rejoices. You feel overjoyed, overwhelmed, happy and at peace.

The important thing is, when you are happy and feel comfortable, it is easier for mindfulness and clarity of consciousness to guard the mind. You can keep the mind focused and unwavered for a longer period of time until being in concentration (*samādhi*). This is when mindfulness and clarity of consciousness is developed into one-pointedness and later into right concentration (*sammāsmādhi*). With the right concentration, we shall see reality through the observation of the mental activities. By *reality*, it means that whenever the mind starts to cling on something, or when the mind begins to speculate, we are aware of it. Once we are aware of such behavior of mind, we will let go of the clinging and the formation altogether. Then we shall see that it is "mere-formation" that has arisen and will eventually fall away. When you are able to see this, there will be nothing left within the mind, because whatever arises will eventually fall away. These mental activities are just thoughts and formation. Once we realize this, once we discern this clearly, thoughts can do us no harm because they are just something that arise and fall away.

There are two types of thoughts. **The first type is in line with reality.** For example, when we think, *"I shall die soon. So before I die, I should study the teachings of the Buddha so that I know and understand more about my life and my own mind. I have been ignorant for so long. If I understand*

the nature of the mind, I shall not suffer." ***This* is the right thinking.** This is **insight!** Or, if we think, *"Indeed, once we are born, we are bound to die. I am already getting old. I always get sick—headache, toothache, stomach-ache. I have problems with my bones; I have pain here and there...My body is deteriorating and aging. I am getting more and more crippled, worn and close to being decayed. Why then should I stay ignorant, deluded and entangled in attachment?"**This* is transcendental wisdom. This type of thinking releases the mind from the grip of clinging. This kind of thinking is beneficial because it is in line with reality.**

The other type of thoughts, however, makes us suffer because it is obsessed with delusion. It is a kind of ignorance. It misleads us and always makes us look outward—paying attention to other people's business, judging people and labeling them; (for instance, we think : this person is bad, that person has a bad attitude towards me, that person is not nice to me, that person makes me unhappy...and so on, and so on.) All these are outward thoughts. These thoughts keep shooting outward. Besides, they are contradictory with their own cause, because in fact, the real cause of ignorant thought is our very own deluded mind that believes in the true existence of the *inherent-self*—always thinking...this is *me*, this is *mine*. We form things and hold on to them. The mind is thus wrapped up within these formations. The result is, no matter which way we turn, there is just suffering that spins us round and round.

That is why the Buddha taught that we should be wise with our own mind, and not to be smart with other people's mind. So, do not busy yourself too much with other people's business. If you should pay attention to anything at all, let it be just enough to survive in the society. You still have this body and this life to take care of. So carry on with your livelihood, but at the same time you must be aware that while you live your life, you have to study your own mind as well, so that your life will be free from suffering. If there should be suffering, at least it should always decrease. If you are aware of this, then you are on the right track. But if you earn a livelihood only to survive or to gain physical comfort and facilities...are you truly happy with

just that? Even if you have all these possessions—a lot of money, good food and all the material comfort—but you have no *Buddha-dhamma* to nourish the mind, you are bound to suffer. You will not be able to handle your own mind, nor train, nor restrain it. When the mind clings to something, you don't have insight to keep your mind on the right track.

We cannot ignore the teachings of the Buddha

You need to really pay attention to your mind. No matter how knowledgeable you are in other fields, but if you have no understanding of the Dhamma—which is the truth about life and mind—no matter how much you want to be happy, you will for sure end up suffering.

Regarding the practice, although different schools have different methods, but the essence is the same. The Buddha taught that one should first develop mindfulness, because mindfulness is the foundation of the practice and is the most important principle. If you practice progressively and are able to develop a stronger mindfulness, you will automatically gain more insight. The Buddha has guaranteed this.

Differences in detail of practicing

Some people recite a mantra or words while they practice mindfulness. They feel that it suits their character temperament and makes their mind at ease. Besides, reciting keeps the mind focused within the body for a longer period of time. Other meditators may recite *Buddho-Dhammo-Sangho* or *na-ma-pha-tha*, or *sammā-araham,* or *rising-falling.* **You can recite anything, but the purpose is to keep the mind focused within yourself. Some people observe the breath...inhaling...exhaling. Some contemplate the hair, body-hair, teeth, skin, flesh, tendon or bone (the contemplation of the 32 parts of the body). Some may prefer to practice while the body is moving and just observe the movement. Whatever technique, the purpose is to develop mindfulness which will lead to concentration and clarity of consciousness. When your mindfulness becomes strong, you will see**

more clearly outward expression of the body and the mind. If you have reached that level, it means you have developed a clear consciousness.

In the beginning state of the practice, mindfulness will keep the mind focus on an object of consciousness. But as the practice goes on, you will begin to be aware of the present condition of the mind and the body. When the mind thinks of something, you are aware that you are thinking. Then you will begin to develop strong mindfulness. Along with it, clear consciousness increases. That is when you develop *Sati-Sampajañña* (mindfulness and clarity of consciousness).

What do you learn when you practice mindfulness?

You get to know our own body and mind.(Mind you! Don't try to know anything else!) Stay mindful of the body and the mind. In other words, keep your mind within yourself. As long as you still need this body to survive, you should also understand both the body and the mind. But it is the mind that is important. However, in the beginning stage, you won't be able to see the mind because it is something abstract, so subtle and hard to pinpoint. Therefore, you have to start first with the body which is grosser. For example, while you walk, you should know how your legs move. You may recite something on top, or observe the incoming and outgoing breath so that mindfulness directs and keeps the mind focused. Then you will develop *Sati-Sampajañña*—mindfulness and clarity of consciousness. **From mindfulness, it will develop to be *Satipattathāna* or Four Foundations of Mindfulness, you will observe or contemplate the body, the feeling, the mind and the mind-objects. In short, you will mindfully observe the body and the mind.**

Observing the body and the mind in details

The body: The body is composed of corporeality (*rūpa*), most of which are the four primary elements (*Mahābhūtarūpa*) namely, earth, water, wind and fire. These four elements together form a body. The other minor units of corporeality within the body are also composed of the

four elements. They are subdivided into different groups, such as, hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin. Or legs, arms, neck, head. On a finer level, the body may be subdivided into cells, molecules and atom. The body is composed of these small units of corporeality. Sometimes we include the space-element (*Ākāsadhātu*) to the *Mahābhūtarūpa*; or sometimes we add the sixth element—the mind or the consciousness (*Viññānadhātu*). In other words, the six elements altogether are body with the mind included.

The mind: Since the mind is something abstract, to know its nature, you have to start with the observation of its manner, such as, thoughts, joy, anger, ill-will, laziness, diligence, sloth and torpor, sadness, resentment, and so on. You can also observe whether you have doubt, or whether your mind is focused and stable. See how the mind is doing. All these activities are the manner of the mind—the mental subject matter.

Observing the five aggregates

1.*Rūpa-khanda:* refers to the corporeality comprised of the elements that together form up into a body.

2.*Vedanā-khanda:* refers to feeling and sensations aroused by the five physical-contacts and the mind-contact, such as happiness, unhappiness or neutral feeling. For example, after sitting in meditation for a long period of time, pain arises. This is called **bodily-pain.** The mind will be aware that a physical pain has arisen. If the mind is strong and wise enough, the mind will realize that it is a mere-physical pain that should not affect the mind. But if the mind is not strong and wise enough, the mind will suffer and becomes agitated. You will want to change the posture, or quit meditating altogether. You feel restless, annoyed or even hurt and discouraged, forming that it is because you do not have enough merit to practice; or you just simply wish the pain went away. However, if the meditator is patient, and proceeds with the observation of the mind until the mind regains its strength, then mindfulness, concentration and insight will develop. The mind can eventually let go the physical pain. The same holds true with **mental-pain.** No matter what the mind feels, you will observe wisely and mindfully until

the mind understands the nature of pain and finally let go. It is possible to really let go, because the mental pain is a mere mental feeling. Pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings are just mental-sensations—merely *Vedanā-khanda.*

3.Saññā-khanda:refers to perception. The acts of knowing, seeing, hearing and remembering are the work of Saññā-khanda. With the information acknowledged bySaññā-khanda, we further form :*this person said this, that person said that, I like that person because she is pretty, that person is not pretty, this person is good, that person is bad, that man is smart, this man is not smart*, and so on. Because we human have the ability to memorize things, mental formation thus originates from the stored information. As a result, the mind is all wrapped up within these formations. This is how things are connected. The process of perception and formation keep repeating themselves over and over, and become the story of our life.

4. ***Sankhāra-khanda:*** refers to mental formations and volitional activities. When you realize that things are merely the result of your own mental formation, why then do you hold on to the notion of the *self*? They are just mental activities—just thoughts that you form. Now take a look, how many thoughts do you have in one day? Because the mind always wanders off, always looks outward, thinks only about external matters , brings in the external information, and form all those things until the mind is clouded. The result is, you keep going back to these mental formations. *This* is the cause of suffering. It is because you are of ignorant of the sublime truth and ignorant of the dhamma that suffering arises. In case of dhamma view, they are merely mental formations and nothing more. Here, the word *formation* expresses itself clearly. The mind makes up something, form something, and then we are ignorant to cling to it…and suffer, of course!

5. ***Viññāna-khanda*:** refers to the consciousness. When something, such as a sound, comes up and we acknowledge it, it is because the ear-consciousness (*Sotaviññāna*) is at work. The eye-consciousness (*Cakkhuviññāna*) does the seeing; the tongue-consciousness (*Jivhāviññāna*) acknowledges the taste; the

nose-consciousness (*Ghānaviññāna*) acknowledges the odours. When we experience pain, it is the work of the body-consciousness (*Kāyaviññāna*). The body-consciousness acknowledges the pain and sends the information to the mind. When the mind is in contact with the pain, the mind-consciousness (*Manoviññāna*) starts working. If we are not wise enough, we think "*I* am hurt; *I* feel the pain". But if we are wise, we shall see that it is *mere-pain.* So, the *Viññāna-khanda* is the faculty that constantly sends information to the mind, and from there, we go round and round forming.

Everything the mind knows and sees is just the working of the five aggregates. When there are causes and conditions, things come into being; when the causes and conditions cease, things disappear. If we are unaware of this reality, we shall cling to the notion of the "*inherent-self*"—this is *I*, this is *mine*. This attitude is called *Attā* or self. Because of this notion of the inherent-self, suffering arises. Still we go along with it, whirling in the mental formations.

Once we realize that our misunderstanding and our deluded mind are the causes of suffering, we need to be—as the Buddha has taught—wise with our mind and start training it with the practice. **Thus, dhamma practice is the process of learning about our nature and realizing the dhamma that concerns us directly. The practice focuses particularly on the mind, because the delusion is right there.**

To study the teachings of the Buddha, first of all, if your mindfulness is still weak, you need to practice. If that is the case, just stick with mindfulness practice for the time being. But for those who already have some knowledge of the dhamma, if the dhamma makes you feel at peace, or if your mind begins to see the light and you feel peaceful when you hear your teacher explaining the truth, then your knowledge is of some benefit. Peaceful feelings alone, however, can lessen your suffering only temporarily. By all means, you need to develop insight, so that you can free from suffering once and for all. If you let yourself be immersed in the pool of suffering, then there is nothing to life! You are born just to suffer, tormented and distressed.

This is indeed an unwholesome. It leads you to the state of misery or lower worlds. **The fact that you suffer suggests that birth *(Jāti)*originates from within the mind itself. *Jātipidukkha*...Birth itself is suffering. Being born is suffering. Therefore, you need to restrain your mind well, study it well and make it wiser, so that suffering has no place. The Buddha has clearly shown the path, and has taught that one should be mindful, be aware and never let the mind wander off.**

If you should recite something while practicing, then do so. For if reciting helps you gain stronger mindfulness, then recite. But if you want to just sit and observe, then do so. While you sit, you may also want to grasp the dhamma to keep your mind on the track, you may as well do so. For example, you may reflect that the four foundations of mindfulness can be viewed as the five aggregates—*rūpa-khanda,vedanā-khanda, saññā-khanda, sankhāra-khanda, and viññāna-khanda*. Or, you can reflect that the five aggregates altogether are just the body and the mind. You can also contemplate the five aggregates to be the four primary elements—earth, water, wind and fire, or include to the group the space-element(*Ākāsa-dhatu*) and the consciousness-element (*viññāna-dhatu*).

The word "*dhātu*" (element) refers to something that comes into being and persists according to its nature. They are minute particles that, when joined together, become something we label with a name. However, if subdivided, they are still elements and nothing more. **There is not a single part of the body that is "*I*". But we still mistake it for being "*I*". This is the misunderstanding that needs correction. We should realize that wherever there is the notion of the inherent-self (the *I* and *me*), there is always suffering. Suffering arises because of the notion of the *self* and our attachment to it.**

The clinging mind holds on to mental formations (*sankhāra*). These *sankhāra* are therefore stored within the mind. For example, when someone says something negative about you, you hold on to those words, and then

they are fixed within the mind. When you are displeased with someone's comment, the words make you feel oppressed and painful. Then suffering arises. After all, words are just *sound*. The person has a mind and feelings; it is only natural that he makes a statement according to what he feels. It is *his* business. As long as you do not bring I or do not take it as *your* business, then suffering does not have a chance. Without attachment, you do not suffer. So in short, *you* are the one who creates your own suffering.

Because of this clinging manner of the mind that holds on to pleasant or unpleasant sense impressions(form, taste, smell, sound and touch), the Buddha advised us to be wise with our own mind. To be wise means to know that our unwise and ignorant mind is the cause of suffering.

We long to be happy, but why then do we still fancy the mental formations that bring us pain? Why do we hold on to this and that and let ourselves be disturbed. Some of those experiences have already passed a long time ago. We ought to be finished with them. But as soon as we see the person's face, the haunting experience comes back and surfaces in the mind. Now the mind is troubled. This is the nature of the unwise and ignorant mind. Therefore, we need to practice our mind wiser by strengthening mindfulness with clear consciousness.

The practice in details

We shall begin with the four foundations of mindfulness (*Satipattathāna*).Try to stay mindful of the mind and the body altogether. As the practice goes on, the power of mindfulness will move on to the four foundations of mindfulness: the body, the feelings, state of consciousness or mind and the mind-objects. This is *because all dhamma are discerned by the power of mindfulness*. You may contemplate in details the five aggregates—corporeality, feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. Or you may contemplate the elements—the physical elements: earth, water, wind, fire, space and the mental element—the consciousness.

You will see that after all, there is nothing but elements and aggregates. No matter what you call them, they are just the natural things that we label as body, feelings, mind and mind-objects. There is not a single bit that is "*I*". If you are aware of this fact, you are *being wise with the mind.*

Sometimes the Buddha compared this body to a mechanical engine. Just like a car. Before the mechanics put all the parts together, they were just bits and pieces of metal. When these parts are assembled into a car, they become something of use.

Our mechanical body may be divided into 32 parts, such as hair, body hair, nails, teeth, flesh, tendons, bones etc. You may contemplate only one particular organ. Some meditators contemplate just the hair alone and are able to see all the way through, discerning that these parts are not *I* and *mine*. This knowledge of the *non-self* can be expansive and applied to the whole universe and all nature. With the practice, you will discern that nothing is *you* nor *yours*.

This tiny bit of knowledge that the mind discerns can expand and become a vast knowledge that applies to all other things. How then can the mind still cling to anything? It cannot anymore! The mind will not cling to anything again because the mind has discerned the reality. This is the reason why you need to be wise with your mind!

As you can see, you can practice being mindful and clear consciousness from any approach. You may contemplate the 5 aggregates, or the 4 elements, 5 elements, 6 elements, or you may choose to contemplate the 32 body parts...They are all the same Dhamma.

A meditator once told me that at first he recited the word *Buddho* while meditating, but there was no progress. Mental formation was still going on. So he switched and contemplated the four elements instead, and tried to see the body as earth, water, wind and fire. Then a thought about his father came up. The mind reflected...*Father is the earth element; Why are you thinking of the earth element?* Then his mind stopped thinking for a while. As his

practice proceeded, his mindfulness and understanding became sharper and quicker; he began to see this body as mere-elements. When his mind started to wander off, he kept reciting, "Elements, elements, mere-elements". Just this word "*the four elements*", stopped his mind wandered off. He told me that there was a part of his mind that loved to wander off, but when he started to see the body as mere-elements, as soon as that mind began to make a move, it came back to its sense. As time passed, his mind had no interest in anything else. The mind could switch back from the body and return itself.

Some people practice the contemplation of the 32 parts by just working only with the hair, body-hair, nails, teeth and skin, while some just simply contemplate only one organ such as the bone, focusing on it, staring at it with penetrating concentration, then there will be some changes will occur within the mind. The mind will discern the body as not being "*I*" nor "*mine*". Some people focus on the teeth or on the eye. Sometimes just one organ is not enough and some people need to focus on all the 32parts, (just like what we recite in the *Kāyagatāsati* mantra), until the mind quiets down.

Some people focus on the breath alone, but later on they may switch to the mind and do not pay attention to the breath. However, the breath is still there. But one switches his focus to the mind because view point of the mind change. When the breath is strong and vivid, we return to the breath; when the mental-activity is vivid, we switch back to the mind. Sometimes while we are observing the mind, we see changes. We see the nature of arising, staying temporarily and falling away. This is dhamma-observing.

Whatever method of observation you use, the practice is all in the body and mind. You observe the body and then move on to the mind. While you are observing the body, a thought comes up and you switch your attention to the thought...that means you have switched back to the mind itself. In fact, the essence of all the methods is one and the same. But we practitioners tend to give more importance to the techniques, saying, "This person practices *the rising and falling* (of the abdomen) technique, that person uses the *buddho* technique, that person

recites the *sammaāraham* technique, that person focuses on the hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, and skin"...and so on. This is why we split into different schools and different branches.

We need to focus on the essence of the dhamma and the essence of the practice itself. With the right view, there will be no such thing as *this path or that path*. The dhamma is one and the same. It is the dhamma of the Buddha. If you have a correct understanding, you will have no doubt, for you will see and understand things as they actually are present.

The same holds true with the cemetery contemplation (*Asubha-kammatthāna*). For some people who have strong sensual lust*(Kāma-rāga)*and strong attachment in the sensory contacts (form, taste, smell, sound and touch), they need to find a way to lessen this *Kāma-rāga.* This can be done by contemplating the four foundations of mindfulness: the body, the feelings, the mind and the mind-objects. That is to see the body and the mind. Finally you will see all the four foundations of mindfulness. Sometimes, some phenomena is more vivid than the others, so the practitioner has to make the adjustment according to his/her temperament.

Some people prefer to observe the movement of the body—primary postures and secondary postures. For example, some people like to walk. While walking, the attention goes to the body most of the time, but sometimes it also switches to the mind. Some people like to sit, because sitting makes them see the state more clearly. If the meditator is in a sitting-posture with awakened mind, he will be able to sit for a long period of time.

There is no fixed method of practice. It depends on the nature and character temperament of the practitioner. The practitioner has to find the technique that suits him. Once he finds it and practices accordingly, as times passes, he will be able to make adjustment and find his own way.

While you are meditating, you may think, "Oh dear, the dhamma seems so far away. When people talk of the cessation of suffering or theNibbāna, it seems unreachable." You feel like that because nowadays there are more defilements and afflictions in the people's heart. It seems that the teachings of the Buddha have been made impure by some schools who adapted the dhamma to suit the temperament of unskillful people.

But during the time of the Buddha, the Blessed One never compromised nor lowers the standard of his teachings. The Dhamma is always the Dhamma. We need to train our mind so that it becomes wiser. Once the mind is wise, it is possible to put out the pain and distress. **This is how the *Buddha-dhamma* should be. Dhamma cannot compromise with the people's defilements. The teachings must never support the defilements. On the contrary, it is meant to train, refine and transform the mind, and to release the mind from suffering.**

If you are on the right track, suffering should decrease. Therefore, if you practice the dhamma and feel better and happier, or feel that your suffering has lessened, that's it! But if after the practice, things get worse, the defilements increase and the ego gets stronger, there must be something wrong along the way. There must be some delusion and some mistakes somewhere, somehow. This needs to be fixed.

So, the way of the Buddha is thus: after the practice you should develop stronger mindfulness and awareness. You should feel better and lighter. All the doubts are clarified. When mental disturbance arises, you will understand clearly its cause & condition and can let go. Suffering lessens because when it arises, you take it as a part of your practice, learning from your pain and distress, until they are replaced by mindfulness and wisdom. *This* is the right path.

What it means to be wise with the mind

The Buddha invited us to observe our own mind and to see whether in the present moment there is much *Abbhijjhā*(covetousness) or not so much. *Abbhijjhā* is when you crave for something so badly. For example, when you see something that belongs to someone, you want to have it too. You want to

have the same thing, or, you want *that* thing that belongs to someone else. The objects of greed that we crave for are connected to the five sensory contacts—coporeality, taste, smell, sound and touch.

Check and see whether there is greed in your mind. See if the greed is strong or mild. Also check whether there is any ill-will (or hatred), and whether the feeling is strong or mild, know it. Try to see whether the mind is prone to ill-will? Is there ill-will left in the mind at present? You can also check if there are much sloth and torpor, laziness, sadness, distraction, or not so much, or none. These are the matter of the mind. See if you have a strong physical desire, or mild, or none. You can examine the mind and see whether there is still much doubt, or not so much, or whether you have clarified all the doubts. Or maybe you can check whether the mind is stable most of the time, or not so much. Try to observe how the mind is doing. You should know these entire mental activities because they are all in the mind.

Thus, to know the nature of the mind, you just have to observe your own mind. Once you know how to observe the mind, the other mental activities will become less active. You must learn to let go until you know that there is no mental action left.

Then why should we sometimes switch our attention to the body?

If you have not yet developed strong mindfulness, you will not be able to pinpoint the mind, because the mind is abstract and changes so fast. Therefore, in the beginning you will have to focus on the body or on the recitation. The body thus remains a residence of the mind until your mindfulness becomes strong enough to direct the mind, then you will see the mind more and more clearly. When the mind becomes vivid, it will pay no more attention to the body. When the mind is vivid, you will see only the mind. Eventually, everything will be just the matter of the mind alone.

Therefore, in order to see the mind, you have to observe the body, recite the words and contemplate the four foundations of mindfulness—

the body, the feelings, the mind and the mind-object, until finally there is nothing else but the mind. The mind will observe just the mental actions and nothing else until it gains clear understanding. From that stage onward, there will be just the knowing-mind or the observer, and the rest are the things seen and known by the mind.

In a way, you are just the observer. In the beginning, the "I" (the personality/ the notion of the inherent-self) is always there. Of course, YOU are the meditators, so YOU have to be the observer, the knower. You still cannot discard this feeling of your*self*. But there are times when you see that things are neither *you* nor *yours*. You will discern that everything is nature. As a result, the practice will be felt right within your heart, and the heart will understand the truth.

Because of the delusion, the notion of *self* is always present in everything you do. When there is peaceful feeling, you say...***I*** feel peaceful. When a good deed is performed, you say...***I*** did something good. When a bad thing happens, you say...***I*** did something bad. All the good and bad actions performed in the past are recorded and stored in the sub-consciousness (*Bhavanga-citta*). Since the notion of the *self* is there, then *you* are the doer. (You *think* you are the doer). All the kamma are stored within the mind. Sometimes you have already forgotten them, but they are still there. The information-storing system of the mind is much more complex and more thorough than that of a computer. All the information from all your past-lives is still there in the sub-consciousness. The recorded kamma thus becomes the quality of your body and your mind.

If you want to put out these karmic forces, you have to work on the sub-consciousness level. The practice can clear away the karmic forces and completely eradicate them. This can be done through the power of concentration (*samādhi*). You have to deal with it while the mind is in *samādhi*, either with your eyes open or close. You just have to be aware that the kamma is there, and see its nature of arising, staying and falling away. This process keeps repeating itself, again and again. Along the

way, changes occur according to their causes and conditions. If you see things in this manner, the mind will begin to relax and let go. After a while you will feel light. With just a little glimpse of reality...Lo! Your mind becomes so bright!

I remember experiencing the reality for the first time. My life and my mind were completely transformed even though I did not attain the realization. At that moment I thought, "So...*this* is *Anattā*—the non-self!" That experience made me feel so light at heart and so clear too. Then I understood clearly that this was the very goal of the practice. From that time on, I worked diligently and continuously.

The experience made me realize that everything depends on the practice. After practicing the four foundations of mindfulness, the contemplation of the five aggregates, the 32 parts of the body, the cemetery, the four elements, the five elements or the six elements, all I saw was just *nature*. There is not one tiny bit of it that indicates an inherent-self. You can look at things from any angle...this one is *rūpa-dhātu*, the corporeality; that one is the *nāma-dhātu*, the mind element. Sometimes the Buddha did not use the word *Khandha* or *aggregate*, but used the word *dhātu* or *element*, namely, *rūpa-dhātu, vedanā-dhātu, saññā-dhātu, sankhāra-dhātu and viññāna-dhātu*. As you can see, they are all the same. They are all *dhātu*. All in all, they are *nature*. They are not "*me*".

The experience of impersonality is for real. Some people have an experience of the *non-self*, and discover that everything is just nature in manifestation. Having a direct experience of the mind can make you feel very light. Those who have not had the experience will eventually see the mind if they continue to practice ardently, because this experience is one of the results of the practice.

You must not crave for the result

The Buddha said, one should be happy just to create a cause and be happy just to practice. The result, however, depends on meditator's spiritual experience during practicing mindfulness. If a monk tells you that contemplating the five aggregates will lead to insight, you immediately want to gain the insight! That's not it! You should not crave for the result. If you crave, the craving itself will block the insight. Instead of craving, you should be content that you are a practitioner. Whatever the result, you will be content. You should be humble with your level of practice and be happy with the result. Do what you have to do (according to your level), and the practice will gradually yield the progress. If you crave for it, you will get nothing in return. The Buddha said we should keep on creating cause and leave the result to the natural cause &condition.

Therefore, the principles are one and the same, that is to develop energy or effort, mindfulness, clear consciousness and the abandonment of welcoming & rejecting the conditions of the world. These are the principles of the teachings of the Buddha. Your duty is to put all effort and keep on practicing continuously. You can do it anywhere; just keep observing within the boundary of your body and mind. Put all effort to develop mindfulness with clear consciousness. You will abstain from welcoming and rejecting. Should welcoming arise, you will discern that welcoming has thus arisen. Should rejecting arise, you will also discern that as well. If an experience pleases you, you will be aware that you are pleased. If it displeases you, you will be aware of that too. By just discerning that those things have arisen in your mind, you will be fine. Whatever happens, if you discern its presence, and then there will be no problem. If an unwholesome thought arises and you are aware of it, the thought dissolves right there. If the mind is restless and you are aware of it, the restlessness ceases. When the mind becomes peaceful, and as far as you are aware that the mind is at peace, that's it! You are doing fine. Just be aware, that's all.

Being aware of whatever arises? How?

Whatever arises—be it a mental image, a hindrance, a physical or mental experience—you will not welcome or reject it. The Buddha said one should abandon welcoming and rejecting the conditions of the world. But if you are still unable to do so (since you are still working on the path and your mind is not strong enough) you should practice being aware of the mental-qualities. For example, if you are pleased with something, be aware that you are pleased. On the other hand, if you are displeased, also be aware of that too.

Sometimes you might need to recite something on top to help strengthening your mindfulness. Some people need to recite "*falling-arising-sitting-touching*". Some people really penetrate into the object of investigation, so that they may get a clearer picture of it. All the recitations lead to the same result. But whatever the technique is, **if the path is right, then it should lead to the realization of non-self (the impersonality). There is no such thing as *I* or *mine*. Everything is just natural phenomena originated from cause &condition. Every natural phenomena arises, stays and falls away. Everything is just the manifestation of nature. You should also know that the reason why you have not yet discerned the truth is because you do not possess enough power. You do not have enough experience with the practice.**

During the time of the Buddha, someone asked the Blessed One, "Why then? If the truth is there, we should have known it right from the very beginning, so we do not have to go through these sufferings." The Buddha answered, "The people who suffer are those who have never heard the dhamma of a worthy one, never met one, never associated with one; and even if they have heard the dhamma of a worthy one, they are not wise with the teachings; they pay no heed nor practice the dhamma; they do not contemplate the dhamma and never allow the mind to see the truth clearly until the mind understands enough to let go."

The cause has been created now that you have heard the teachings. From now on it is just the matter of practicing. If you begin to practice, make

sure you do it correctly according to the Buddha's path. If you do so, the result will come by itself.

Some people asked whether they would really attain the realization if they practice. To this question, I would like to say that, if you choose the right path and practice the right way, the path will certainly lead to Nibbāna because this path of the Buddha is the *one and only one*. You cannot find it in the teachings of any other religion. It is the words of the Buddha himself. Before the Blessed One was enlightened, he had gone to all the schools in India and Jambutvipa(the Indian subcontinent); but their training did not really lead to the complete cessation of suffering. Finally, the Buddha practiced on his own and discovered the Path.

Regarding the practice, the Buddha said that the perfection of the *Satipattathāna* (the four foundations of mindfulness) will lead to the perfection of the *Bojjhanga* (the seven factors of enlightenment). Within the Bojjhanga itself, mindfulness is also one of the seven factors; *Dhammavicaya*, the second factor, refers to the investigation of truth; *Viriya* is the effort; *Pīti*is the joy or zest; *Pasaddhi* is the tranquility; *Samādhi* is the concentration and *Upekkhā* is the equanimity. These are all about matter of mind. The perfection of the seven factors of enlightenment leads to transcendental wisdom and deliverance. That is the extinction of all defilements and suffering—the *Nibbāna*.

The Buddha has stated clearly that in order to attain the *Nibbāna*, one has to practice these following dhamma:

1.***Satipattathāna***-the four foundations of mindfulness: that is, to be awareness of mindfulness and contemplation of body, feeling, mind and mind-objects.

2. ***Sammappadhāna*** or the four right exertions (or right efforts), are:

-*Sanvara-padhāna*: the effort to avoid or to prevent welcoming and rejecting; to be aware (know and see) that these mental qualities arise, stay temporarily and fall away.

-*Pahāna-padhāna*: the effort to abandon welcoming and rejecting; to be aware that the mental qualities are neither *I* nor *mine*, and that they will eventually fall away.

-*Bhāvanā-padhāna*: the effort to develop; in other words, the effort to practice and to develop mindfulness and clarity of consciousness.

-*Anurakkhanā-padhāna:* the effort to maintain; in other words, the effort to maintain the mindfulness and clarity of consciousness, and develop it to the fullest until the practice results in the extinction of all defilements and suffering —the Nibbāna. These are the teachings regarding the right effort.

3. ***Iddhipāda***: road to power or success consist of the following four qualities:

-*Chanda*: the will towards practicing dhamma.

-*Viriya*: energy or effort towards practicing.

-*Chitta*: the concentration or intensification of consciousness. In other words, you will dedicate

yourself to the practice. Whatever you do, you will take it as a training of the mind. The mind

should be wiser and not engage in mental formation that gives rise to suffering.

-*Vimamsā*: refers to the investigation. You should always investigate your inner qualities and

try your best to correct and improve yourself.

4. ***Indrīya:*** the five spiritual faculties:

-*Saddhā*: faith or confidence in the teachings

-*Viriya*: effort

- *Sati* : mindfulness

-*Samādhi*: concentration

-*Paññā*: the discernment, wisdom, understanding, insight; in other words, you will discern that

is no inherent-self, no personality.

When the five spiritual faculties are strong, the five strengths (*Bala*)[1] will develop.

5. The Noble Eightfold Path: the Middle Way

1. *Sammā-ditthi*: right view. That is to discern suffering and the causes of suffering. To discern that the body and the mind are composed of dependent components. They are not *we*; they are not *ours*. Once the mind sees this reality, it will let go and see suffering being put out. The mind thus sees the path to the extinction of suffering.
2. *Sammā-sankpappa:* right thought. This refers to the thoughts free from sensual pleasures, ill-will and malevolence.
3. *Sammā-vāca*: right speech. This refers to abandoning false speech and being careful with words. Instead of talking idly about external happenings that give rise to mental disturbance, you should abandon that habit and be more mindful with speech. Besides, you should check whether what you said was a lie and not in line with the fact; whether such words will cause problems and trouble; whether they are abusive words; whether they are gossips that lead to disharmony, conflict and quarrels. Check also whether you say it because you want to make a good impression of yourself, to make other people love and trust you, or to gain some benefit for yourself. All these false speeches come from you. Therefore, if you want to correct them, you have to start correcting yourself first, so that your speech will be *Samma-vāca*.

---

[1] Bala is strength or power. Among various groups of powers the following five are (1) faith (saddha), (2)energy (viriya),(3) mindfulness (sati), (4)concentration (*samādhi*), (5) wisdom (*paññā*).Their particular aspect, distinguishing them from the corresponding five spiritual faculties(indriya), is that they are unshakeable by their opposites: (1) the power of faith is unshakable by faithlessness(unbelief); (2) energy, by laziness; (3) mindfulness, by forgetfulness; (4) concentration, by distractedness; (5) wisdom, by ignorance. They represent the aspect of firmness in the spiritual faculties.

4. *Sammā-kammanta*: right action. This refers to the abandoning of the 3 sensual misconducts: taking life, stealing and sexual-misconduct.
5. *Sammā-ājīva*: right livelihood. This refers to abandoning dishonest livelihood and the profession that causes trouble to other people. This includes abstaining from cheating and swindling.
6. *Sammā-vāyāma*: right effort. This refers to effort to develop mindfulness with clear consciousness.
7. *Sammā-sati*: right mindfulness. This refers to being constantly mindful of the body, the feelings, the mind and the mind-object.(being mindful of the four foundations of mindfulness)
8. *Sammā-samādhi*: right concentration. This refers to having right concentration that is in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

Thus, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four qualities of power, the five spiritual faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors of enlightenment and the Noble Eightfold Path is an important dhamma that lead to enlightening which together constitute the 37 qualities contributing to enlightenment*(Bodhipakkiya-dhamma)*.

When the teachings is categorized into different groupings, we think, "Wow! The dhamma is huge and enormous!" But in fact, all the practices have the same essence. They aim at the phenomena or the mind-object or mental activities (the dhamma) arisen within the mind and the body.

Therefore, you need not busy yourself with dhamma content in details. Just stick with the practice of mindfulness. As the practice goes on, your mindfulness will be strong enough to direct the mind and maintain concentration. Later on you will develop mindfulness with clear consciousness. All dhamma—all the phenomena (dhamma)will simultaneously manifest itself when its causes & conditions ripen. The reason I explain each limb of the teachings is because I want you to see the structure of the *Buddha-dhamma* more clearly. The practice should be based upon scientific reality and not upon superstition and miracle. The practice is all about creating the right cause that are in line with the Noble Eightfold

Path. If your practice has achieved the perfection, it will absolutely lead to Nibbāna. This is the supreme goal of every life.

The result of the practice

You will know that the practice is yielding results when you gain more insight, you can abandon unwholesome qualities more than before and the mind is less disturbed because there is less ego. So, no matter what happens, control your mind and guard it well. When something comes up take it as a test and as an invaluable opportunity to see the behavior and the nature of the mind. You will know every aspect of the mind so thoroughly that nothing can make you suffer. You will be free from suffering because you discern everything as the manifestation of nature originated from its cause &condition. Even the mind itself is nature.

Observing the mind

In the beginning of the practice, you feel that there is a consciousness or mind that observes the mind. But as the practice goes on, there is no such thing as *"I"*, (no inherent-self, no personality whatsoever).You will see the mind as *mere-nature.* Finally, you will abandon the notion of "self" altogether.

In fact there is no such thing as "I". There has never been "I" from the very beginning. But in the beginning when you practice, you still need this "self" to start with. You try to be aware that you are observing something, and try to see whether there is any personality in it or not. For example, in the case of *vedanā*, it is physical pain felt within the body. The mind that acknowledges the pain is something separate from the pain itself. It is called "the knowing-mind". In a weaker mind, a strong feeling can magnetize the mind, and the mind cannot help but look at that feeling. But as you watch the feeling closely, mindfulness regains its strength. Thus, the mind will also become stronger because mindfulness itself is mind-power.

I always give examples on feelings because it is evident that feelings occur inside your body. But still they are not yours. The mind can see that they are "mere-feelings". They are just the *vedanā-khanda* and not *the self.* The one who *sees* is the mind itself, while the consciousness (*viññāna*) is the knower. But behind all the seeing and knowing, the mind is the principal. A strong mind has the power to see and acknowledge things; it is thus "*the knowing-mind*".

Where there is mindfulness, there is concentration

Concentration is also mind-power. The mind that is aware that there has never been "I" will want to separate itself from the body. But the reason why it is still unable to do so is because it has not gained enough strength. However, as the practice goes on, the mind will gain more and more insight.With conviction, effort and patience at hands—and if the mind is strong enough—the mind will step back from the body to observe mind. If the mind is strong enough, nothing can magnetize it nor pull it off. For example, when you feel troubled because the mind is predominated by something, the thought has the power to lure the mind towards it. If the mind is weak, it will be muddling with that thought. In order to be able to pull yourself out of that force, you have to train and strengthen the mind.

To release the mind from suffering, we need to train and strengthen the mind with the practice. We also need strong conviction. Those who do not have enough conviction will be more interested in other matters than the teachings of the Buddha. That is why they would rather turn to something else than practicing. When conviction, effort, mindfulness and concentration are insufficient, then discernment-faculty (*paññā*) also becomes weak. This is what we call *weak Indrīya*. For this reason, those people are still lost in the whirlpool of suffering.

When the five faculties are strong—when you have strong conviction and exertions—then you will have the power. You will practice as best you can, with persistence, determination and a heart of a fighter who will never give up. **When mindfulness gains its strength, it will foster concentration**

and discernment. Then you will see clearly that this body is neither *you* nor *yours*. You feel as if you are one thing while the feeling is another thing, and also thought is another thing or the other things apart from it are not one. *You* are also separate from them.

As the practice goes on, you will be able to discern that things are merely nature-in-manifestation. At some point, you will find that there is no such thing as "self". This is how you accumulate your knowledge of the dhamma. The knowledge enables the mind to accept impersonality (non-self). Nature is all there is. Whether you are ready to discern depends on the level of your practice. If you have not conditioned enough causes for insight, then you will have to keep on working.

The important thing is, in the process of practicing, there must be no craving (for rapid progress, excellence and superiority). There must be no craving at all whatsoever! Everything will take care of itself. You will see things as nature that manifests itself according to its cause and condition.

From now on, check yourself every day, and see if there is anything that needs to be fixed. The correction needs to be done while the mind is well-concentrated. When the mind is in one-pointedness, there will be no partiality. You will not take side with yourself. You will begin to see your short coming and see what needs to be done. Hammer this in your head, so that it goes right into your mind. Then your mind will become stronger.

Lastly, may all of you make a resolve to keep on practicing the Buddha-dhamma continuously, and have progress on the path of practicing dhamma. May you be endowed with wisdom, realize the supreme truth, and be freed from the all-encompassing cycle of suffering—the*Samsāra*.

Monks, there are these five dangers in the way:
age, illness, famine, disharmony among people and splits within the Sangha.
Monks, these are the five future dangers that are just enough, when considered, for a monk — heedful, ardent, and resolute — to live for the attaining of the as-yet-unattained, the reaching of the as-yet-unreached, the realization of the as-yet-unrealized.
Anagata-bhayaniSutta - AnguttaraNikaya

"Straight" is the name that road is called,
And "Free From Fear" the quarter whither thou art bound.
The chariot is the "Silent Runner" named,
With wheels of Righteous Effort fitted well.
Conscience the Leaning-board, the Drapery
Is Heedfulness; the Driver is the Norm,
I say, and Right View, they that run before.
And be it woman, be it man
For whom such Chariot doth wait, by that same car
Into Nibbana's presence shall they come.
AchraSutta - SamyuttaNikaya, SagathaVagga